



### SAVING AMERICA'S FUTURE: A CHALLENGE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

This comprehensive report, *Saving America's Future: A Challenge to the American People*, is founded on the principle that the American people want and need a stark, real assessment of our country's present state. While our report concluded that our country is not in good standing on many issues, we are not here to scare the American people, but to inform. The only people who can make the real changes necessary to save America from its current state are the American people as a whole. While these challenges are significant, we can support politicians who are making good decisions and hold accountable those who are not.

#### What makes this report different?

- **It is comprehensive.** While many reports have made clear that America has significant struggles in health care, education or security, for example, this report is different because it is comprehensive. We wanted to paint a clear but broad picture of the entire American issue landscape. When these important issues are taken all together, the result is striking and clearly concerning.
- **It provides recommendations.** We didn't want to provide a bleak picture of the state of America today just to scare people. We wanted to inform them and provide some ideas about how the government can organize itself to address these challenges. The project will issue subsequent reports that provide specific policy recommendations.
- **It is not afraid to place some of the blame – and some of the responsibility for driving solutions – on the American people.** We didn't pull punches in our assessment of the challenges America faces, nor did we hesitate to point out that *all of us* have to change some behaviors and bear responsibility for steering the country back toward a more positive future.
- **It pulls on the combined expertise of a world-class group of experts.** The panel of 150 issue team members who were involved in researching and drafting this report have over 2,500 years of cumulative experience in government and the military. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and political parties.

#### Steering Committee:

The Honorable David Abshire (Sponsor)  
The Honorable Norman Augustine (Co-chair)  
The Honorable C. Fred Bergsten  
The Honorable William Brock  
Dr. William Brody  
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Admiral James Loy, USCG (Ret.)  
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The Honorable Roy Romer (Co-chair)  
The Honorable Richard Solomon  
The Honorable Dr. Louis Sullivan  
The Honorable David Walker (Co-chair)  
The Honorable Togo West, Jr.  
Dr. Daniel Yergin

### Key Findings: America's Ten Grand Challenges

1. **Stabilize the Economy:** The economy must be addressed before attempting to reform any other major areas in government. In the fourth quarter of 2008, America's GDP shrank by 6.2 percent, the largest drop since 1982. Since November 2008, over 2.6 million jobs have been lost.
2. **Restore Strategic Leadership:** Many of the big problems facing the country exist because this broken system did not prevent them from happening in the first place. The federal government spends \$4 on older Americans for every \$1 it commits to education, health care, income support, and other programs relating to children.
3. **Address our Deteriorating Fiscal Condition:** We cannot continue building up the national debt. National debt is almost \$11 trillion and the government has committed to over \$56 trillion in liabilities and unfunded promises.
4. **Reform the Health Care System:** Despite our high level of investment, our health care system lags behind its counterparts in other industrialized countries. We spend over \$2,000 more on health care per person than the second-highest-spending nation on Earth, but our health care ranks 31st in the world and nearly 46 million Americans are uninsured.
5. **Strengthen our Educational System:** In a world more competitive by the day, we are graduating young Americans who are already behind many of their international counterparts. We spend more per student than any other developed nation, yet we rank 29th in science and 31st in math.
6. **Reinvest in Innovation:** The future prosperity of the United States is inexorably linked to its continued preeminence in science and technology. That prosperity is now at risk. A recent assessment ranked America dead last in progress over the past decade.
7. **Address Energy Dependence and the Environment:** The time has finally arrived to shift the country's energy signature toward clean energy sources and higher levels of domestic supply. The United States is the world's largest energy consumer—we produce 10 percent of the world's petroleum, but consume 24 percent.
8. **Invest in Infrastructure:** The physical infrastructure is crumbling around us, and the level of investment needed to bring us up to speed is extremely high. We have neglected the nation's physical infrastructure to such a degree that it would cost \$2.2 trillion just to bring it up to "good" condition.
9. **Modernize National and Homeland Security:** There is a pronounced need to modernize the national security architecture to reflect new challenges and opportunities. The current national security system, which was crafted in 1947, is a relic and poorly equipped to tackle current and future threats at home and abroad.
10. **Reinforce the U.S. Military:** The U.S. all-volunteer force is being pushed to the extreme, and the Pentagon alone needs to protect over 15,000 local, regional, and wide-area information networks including over 7 million IT devices.

### Key Findings: Four Major Recommendations to Organize the Government to Address These Critical Issues

1. **Develop a ten-year national strategy** based on a comprehensive assessment and integrated national purpose to align all elements of government and the allocation of resources.
2. **Create a bipartisan Fiscal Future Commission (FFC)** to develop statutory budget controls, comprehensive tax, entitlement, and other fiscal reforms.
3. **Emphasize prevention/wellness and develop strategies to reduce costs in the health care system**, while increasing overall efficiency and effectiveness.
4. **Raise educational standards** to equal or better than the best in the world; **provide current and prospective teachers the resources, incentives, and training** to give them equal standing with teachers globally.